



**CITY OF SUNNYVALE
DRAFT DOWNTOWN
SPECIFIC PLAN
2003**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Preface

The Downtown Specific Plan area comprises roughly 125 acres, generally bounded by Evelyn Avenue to the north, Bayview Avenue to the east, El Camino Real to the south and Charles Street to the west (Figure 1.1, Downtown Specific Plan Area). This 2003 Downtown Specific Plan is intended as an update of the 1993 Downtown Specific Plan. Specifically, this plan increases the number of residential units, emphasizes reconnection of the street grid in the Town Center area and creates a sense of arrival along Mathilda Avenue with wider sidewalks and taller buildings. These updates continue to address the special assets, character, and identity that make Sunnyvale unique while targeting development to meet current day conditions. This updated Specific Plan focuses on three goals:

- Establishing a common vision for the downtown
- Defining a unique market niche
- Creating the framework to link together current and future downtown projects into a vibrant, cohesive place.

Many of the basic building blocks for these goals are present in the downtown today. These include a strong variety of uses and the proximity to many transit options. Existing commercial assets consist of a vibrant Murphy Avenue, department stores and small independent businesses. A variety of nearby residential, office and civic uses complement these commercial assets. Transit options include a Caltrain station, a variety of available bus routes, and remnants of an existing street grid which may be re-established for increased vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian connections. This wide range of activities and uses infuses the downtown with unusual variety and vitality, and creates the potential for a traditional, full service and mixed-use downtown.

The Downtown Specific Plan has been prepared in compliance with the Sunnyvale General Plan, ordinances and regulations, Planning and Zoning Law Government Code, and requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Specific Plan is a long term planning document. Implementation of this Specific Plan is expected to take place over a 20-year period.

Goals and Policies

The Goals and Policies of the Specific plan create the basic priorities for implementing the downtown vision. Goals are intended as “high level outcomes” desired for the community and policies are definite courses of actions to guide present and future decisions. The primary goals for the Downtown Specific Plan are:

- Develop land uses in the General Plan adopted by the City Council in June 2003 in an attractive and cohesive physical form that clearly identifies Sunnyvale’s downtown.
- Establish the downtown as the cultural, retail, financial and entertainment center of the community, complemented by employment, housing and transit opportunities.

- Promote a balanced street system that serves all users well regardless of their mode of travel.
- Protect and enhance existing neighborhoods.
- Improve the street character.



FIGURE 1.1 DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN AREA

Downtown Design Concept

VISION FOR DOWNTOWN SUNNYVALE

Development of the new plan started with a visioning process that attempted to capture Sunnyvale's unique character and potential. A Downtown Stakeholders Advisory Committee was created by the City Council to work with City staff and consultants in preparation of a new downtown plan. The Committee represented all of the major interests in the Downtown: residents, businesses, property owners and developers. The Committee held six workshops and forwarded their vision and recommendations on to the Council.

The vision can be encapsulated into a single statement:

“An enhanced, traditional downtown serving the community with a variety of destinations in a pedestrian-friendly environment.”

To achieve this vision, the Downtown Specific Plan consists of “building blocks” which serve to direct physical development and provide form and continuity to the downtown. These building blocks can be categorized as:

- Variety of uses
- Downtown Districts
- Connections
- Gateways
- Historical Buildings and Heritage Resources
- Plazas and Open Space

VARIETY OF USES

The new plan proposes strengthening this mix of uses and organizes it into a series of districts. Promoting mixed uses in the districts is a key feature of the future downtown as it creates a lively street scene, increases walkability, reduces dependence on the automobile, and provides for higher-density housing in proximity to mass transit.

DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS

Central to the Specific Plan concept is the creation of districts within the downtown, each displaying its own identity in terms of land use, architectural style, street treatment, landscaping, street tree appearance, signage and street fixtures. The uniqueness and quality of architectural design and public spaces within these districts will determine the success of the downtown as an interesting and attractive place in which to live, work, shop and visit.

CONNECTIONS

Creating a well-organized and comfortable series of connections throughout the downtown is a high priority. These connections should include the following:

- Re-establishing the street grid
- Improving Street Character
- Facilitating the use of mass transit

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS AND HERITAGE RESOURCES

The downtown contains significant historical buildings located in landmark districts, individual landmark properties and local heritage resources. There is one landmark district located in Block 2 and named the Murphy Station Landmark District. There are also several heritage resource buildings in the Specific Plan area, as well as heritage trees at the center of Block 18. In addition, the downtown is bordered to the south by the City's only Heritage Housing District on the 500 block of Taaffe, Frances and Murphy. These structures and trees are important references to the City's history.

Preservation of these structures is encouraged, and incorporation of these historical architectural features is encouraged for new development in the downtown.

GATEWAYS AND WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

Gateways announce the presence of the downtown and define its boundaries by establishing primary downtown, district and local neighborhood markers. Primary downtown gateways announce arrival to the general area and district markers encourage entry into commercial areas of the downtown districts. Wayfinding signage will further this goal by announcing the presence of the downtown, directing traffic to convenient parking and indicating major shopping destinations. Residential gateways establish boundaries and convey a sense of “residents only.”

PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE

There are three main areas in the downtown for open space and each fulfills a different function in the downtown.

- Downtown Plaza (the corner of Frances Street and Evelyn Avenue) - provides the downtown with a formal gathering space. Programmed events in the Evelyn plaza would be able to take advantage of the plaza's setting and close proximity to regional transit such as the Sunnyvale Caltrain Station.
- Murphy Avenue Plaza - (the corner of Washington and Murphy Avenue) - enhances access and visibility to the northern department store's entrance. This plaza could be the downtown's “meeting place” embellished with a fountain, shade trees and places for sitting. A portion of the plaza could also be an event space, hosting the downtown's weekend market and Sunnyvale's annual gatherings.
- Town Square - (center of Block 18) provides a primary greens space for the downtown and takes advantage of significantly sized redwoods. The plan encourages building on this green area to create a public open area to be surrounding on all sides by retail, creating the city's central green.

General Design Guidelines

Design guidelines articulate the vision for private improvements to the downtown. The guidelines include policies on site design and organization, parking, building facades, landscaping, signage and service facilities. The primary goals of these design guidelines are:

- Promote high quality development.
- Enhance the pedestrian experience at the street level through the use of architectural features, defined street edges, awnings and arcades and interesting signage.
- Encourage “organic” development that appears to have been built over time.
- Balance the competing demands of encouraging creativity and diversity in architectural styles and creating a sense of cohesion between developments and streets
- Use historic architectural styles and details to reflect Sunnyvale's history.

Downtown Districts and Development Standards

Building on these general guidelines, individual districts and primary land uses are described with appropriate specific guidelines and numeric development standards. The development standards include approximate residential densities and building square

footages, minimum development size, building heights, maximum lot coverage, and setback requirements.

The following is a list of downtown districts:

1. Commercial Core District - The most significant development will occur in this area. This contains a mix of high-intensity uses with ground-level activity, plazas and open space, and connections to mass transit.
2. Sunnyvale/Carroll District - This district contains primarily higher density residential uses to transition from the intense commercial core to the lower density residential neighborhoods. These residential uses will be supplemented with a small amount of service retail.
3. South of Iowa District - This is a lower-density residential district which buffers the single family neighborhood to the south from the development in the commercial core. Lower scale development is envisioned here with architectural styles that refer to historic Sunnyvale homes.
4. West of Mathilda Avenue District - These high-density residential uses are intended to complement the commercial development occurring on the East side of Mathilda Avenue with higher buildings, corner retail spaces and stoop-style entries to residential units. The higher building height of four stories steps down to two stories along Charles.

Circulation and Parking

A primary goal of the Specific Plan is to improve the transportation system and parking facilities in the downtown. The downtown is served by a variety of major streets as well as several transit systems that promote connections throughout the area. Mathilda Avenue and El Camino Real are primary arterials that bring local and regional traffic to the downtown. An existing street grid made up of smaller avenues and neighborhood streets connect the downtown districts together. Transit systems include Caltrain commuter rail system and Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority bus service at a multimodal transit station at Evelyn Avenue and Frances Street.

The Specific Plan envisions future transportation improvements in the following areas:

- Establishment of new streetscape designs, including wider sidewalks and landscaping throughout the downtown
- Enhancement of bus transfer facility on Frances Street
- Creation of bicycle lanes on Evelyn, Iowa and Sunnyvale Avenues
- Creation of "boulevard" configuration for Mathilda Avenue, including pedestrian, and frontage improvements
- Reconfiguration of Washington Avenue at Mathilda intersection
- Restoration of as much of the original street grid as possible
- Installation of Mathilda Avenue railroad overpass improvements

Utilities

Improvements to some of the municipal utility systems (water, sanitary sewer and storm drainage) will be needed to serve the downtown at full development. These

improvements are summarized in Chapter 8 along with non-municipal utility service needs. These improvements will be paid for by private development.

The Specific Plan's largest potential impact to utilities is an increase in sanitary sewer flows. At this time, calculations show that there should be sufficient capacity to meet the future land uses. Both the storm drain system and water pressure are sufficient to meet the proposed demand. Some improvements are proposed for the water system to meet the need for increased fire-fighting flow in the high-density residential areas.

Implementation

The Specific Plan sets the regulatory framework for evaluating future development. The Sunnyvale Downtown Specific Plan will be implemented through a combination of public and private actions and investments. Generally, the private sector will be responsible for on-site buildings, parking, landscaped areas and standard developer infrastructure improvements. The public sector will provide circulation, open space and downtown identity improvements. The following actions and programs are needed to implement the Specific Plan:

1. Amend the Zoning regulations.
2. Adopt Official Plan lines for future streetscape improvements.
3. Implement Economic Development Programs to encourage redevelopment, attract businesses and protect local businesses.
4. Develop a long term plan for managing parking in the downtown.
5. Explore sources of funding for future infrastructure and transportation improvements.
6. Evaluate the role of the Redevelopment Agency in meeting the goals of the Specific Plan.
7. Develop a construction management program to minimize construction-related impacts on nearby businesses and residents.
8. Implement the mitigation monitoring program.

2. PREFACE

Location

The Downtown Specific Plan area comprises roughly 125 acres, generally bounded by Evelyn Avenue to the north, Bayview Avenue to the east, El Camino Real to the south and Charles Street to the west (Figure 1.1, Downtown Specific Plan Area). Regional vehicular access to the area is from US-101, SR-237, Highway 82 (El Camino Real) via Mathilda Avenue; and I-280 via Sunnyvale-Saratoga Road. The boundaries of the Specific Plan are generally Evelyn Avenue to the north, Bayview Avenue to the east, El Camino Real to the south and Charles Street to the west (Figure 2.1, Downtown Specific Plan Area).

Purpose

This document is intended as an update the 1993 Downtown Specific Plan. These updates continue to address the special assets, character, and identity that make Sunnyvale unique while targeting development to meet current day conditions. Specifically, this plan increases the number of residential units, emphasizes reconnection of the street grid in the Town Center area and creates a sense of arrival along Mathilda Avenue with wider sidewalks and taller buildings. Many of the basic building blocks for these goals are present in the downtown today. This updated Specific Plan focuses on three goals:

- Establishing a common vision for the downtown
- Defining a unique market niche
- Creating the framework to link together current and future downtown projects into a vibrant, cohesive place.

These include a strong variety of uses and the proximity to many transit options. Existing commercial assets consist of a vibrant Murphy Avenue, department stores and small independent businesses. A variety of nearby residential, office and civic uses complement these commercial assets. Transit options include a Caltrain station, a variety of available bus routes, and remnants of an existing street grid which may be re-established for increased vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian connections. This wide range of activities and uses infuses the downtown with unusual variety and vitality, and creates the potential for a traditional, full service and mixed-use downtown.

Regulatory Compliance

The Downtown Specific Plan has been prepared in compliance with the Sunnyvale General Plan, ordinances and regulations, Planning and Zoning Law Government Code, and requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The land uses, development standards, and transportation and infrastructure improvements located in this document are in compliance with the 1997 General Plan Land Use and Transportation Element and subsequent amendments as approved by City Council. The plan meets the requirements for Specific Plans as listed in Government Code Section 65450 et. Seq. Lastly, pursuant to State and Local CEQA Guidelines, the City of

Sunnyvale determined that the Specific Plan could result in significant environmental impacts and prepared a Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The Downtown Improvement Program Update EIR assessed all potentially significant impact and identified possible mitigation measures, in accordance with CEQA.

Time Frame

The Specific Plan is a long term planning document. Implementation of this Specific Plan is expected to take place over a 20-year period. However, the rate at which the entire plan is implemented depends on the rate at which downtown property owners desire to develop their property. This Specific Plan describes how the downtown will change and emerge.

Authority

As a charter city, Sunnyvale has a great deal of flexibility as to how it approaches planning matters. Specific plans, as addressed in the California Government Code, enable cities or counties to plan portions of their jurisdictions as a means of implementing the General Plan. This has been chosen as an appropriate tool for planning efforts in the downtown. This Specific Plan was prepared and amended following a process similar to that used for the preparation and amendment of a general plan.

3. GOALS AND POLICIES

- A. Develop land uses set forth in the General Plan as amended by the City Council in June 2003 in an attractive and cohesive physical form that clearly identifies Sunnyvale's downtown.
 - A.1. Ensure adequate public utility services and infrastructure.
 - A.2. Minimize construction impact on businesses and residents in the downtown by developing a construction management program.
- B. Establish the Downtown as the cultural, retail, financial and entertainment center of the community, complemented by employment, housing and transit opportunities.
 - B.1. Encourage mixed uses throughout the downtown when consistent with the district character.
 - B.2. Encourage below-market-rate housing in all residential neighborhoods.
 - B.3. Improve the Town Center area by reinforcing connections into and through the mall and improve the quality of the tenant mix and the mall's physical environment
 - B.4. Continue to encourage landscape, streetscape and façade improvements for all streets throughout the downtown.
 - B.5. Promote opportunities for small independent businesses and merchants by creating sites for independent retail and entertainment venues.
- C. Promote a balanced street system that serves all users well regardless of their mode of travel.
 - C.1. To the extent possible, maintain service level D as the lowest acceptable service level for intersections in the Downtown.
 - C.2. Encourage strong pedestrian and bicycle linkages through the downtown.
 - C.3. Promote the use of public transit by intensifying land use and activities near transit cores.
 - C.4. Encourage shared parking in the downtown to minimize the amount of land devoted for parking areas and manage parking so it does not dominate mode choice decisions or the built environment.
 - C.5. Enhance transit areas and multimodal connections such as the train station on Evelyn with the bus transfer facility on Frances and other downtown transit locations.
 - C.6. Provide adequate access to parking in the downtown.
 - C.7. Follow the VTA standards for bicycle parking to the extent possible.
- D. Protect and enhance existing neighborhoods.

- D.1. Buffer single family neighborhoods from higher density residential or commercial uses through the use of lower building heights and privacy measures such as increased landscaping and reduction in windows along elevations that directly face single family properties.
- D.2. Provide gateway markers at the entrances to lower-density residential neighborhoods in order to protect neighborhoods from cut-through traffic and commercial parking. Gateways should convey “resident-only” access.
- D.3. Encourage intensification of specified high-density residential and commercial districts while maintaining the character and density of single family neighborhoods surrounding the downtown.
- E. Improve the street character.
 - E.1. Create a sense of arrival and address through the improvement of major arterials to the downtown in accordance with the proposed streetscape designs.
 - E.2. Improve the quality of key vehicular and pedestrian linkages that function as important feeders into the downtown, such as Sunnyvale, Washington and Iowa Avenues.